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Planning for Happy Neighborhoods

Deirdre Pfeiffer and Scott Cloutier

Problem, research strategy, and findings: There is increasing interest in planning for healthy communities, but little is known about how planners can affect mental health and wellbeing in neighborhoods, although much is known about how planners can affect physical health through neighborhood design. In this review essay, we draw lessons from a cross-disciplinary set of studies to reveal how the neighborhood built environment may affect one aspect of residents' wellbeing: happiness. Providing residents access to open, natural, and green space may directly increase their happiness. Incorporating design features that allow for social interaction and safety also may promote residents' happiness.

Takeaway for practice: Planners have the capacity to contribute to greater opportunities for happiness in neighborhoods. Strategies include integrating happiness-related indicators into health impact assessments and employing a new, participatory neighborhood planning process, the Sustainability Through Happiness Framework.

Keywords: neighborhood, happiness, subjective wellbeing, life satisfaction, built environment

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Planning for health is of growing concern in the planning profession, as seen in the dozens of conference sessions, articles, and special issues of journals that have addressed this topic since the early 2000s (e.g., APA, 2015b; Boarnet, 2006; Corburn, Curl, Arredondo, & Malagon, 2015; Doyle, Kelly-Schwartz, Schlossberg, & Stockard, 2006; Frank, 2000; McAndrews & Marcus, 2014). Planners, however, have focused overwhelmingly on their role in advancing physical health. This leaves a gap in our understanding of the role that planners can play in increasing mental and emotional health and spiritual wellbeing.

In this review essay, we aim to fill this gap by revealing how planners can shape happiness, an aspect of wellbeing, on the neighborhood level. Diverse measures for happiness exist, including positive or negative emotions about immediate life experiences, overall life satisfaction, and one's sense of purpose, fulfillment, and self-realization. We use a holistic definition of happiness in this article that captures its complexity: how positively people feel about their lives.

First, we summarize lessons learned from a cross-disciplinary set of studies about the drivers of happiness. Then, we identify three neighborhood built environment characteristics that seem most directly related to residents' happiness: 1) access to open, natural, and green space; 2) design features that allow for social interaction; and 3) design features that ensure personal security. Next, we show how planners can increase opportunities for neighborhood happiness by adapting health impact assessments and adopting a new participatory neighborhood planning process, the Sustainability Through Happiness Framework. A health impact assessment is a tool planners can use to assess a proposed plan, policy, or project action and recommend decisions that would lead to greater overall health and more equitable health outcomes. We recommend that planners integrate criteria addressing access to open, natural, and green space and design features that allow for social interaction and safety into health impact assessments to evaluate potential impacts on neighborhood happiness. Planners can use the Sustainability Through Happiness Framework to complement the use of health impact assessments, since the framework

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allows planners to proactively and collaboratively plan with neighborhood residents for greater opportunities for neighborhood happiness. Planning scholars also have a role to play in helping to identify effective planning interventions. Future research directions include better understanding how much neighborhoods shape residents' happiness and the complex ways that built environment factors such as the diversity of housing types, housing conditions, transportation infrastructure, and polluting land uses affect happiness.

What Drives Happiness?

Happiness, as a field of inquiry, spans disciplines as diverse as philosophy, psychology, sociology, and economics, yet it is relatively unexplored by planners (e.g., Morris, 2011). Governments worldwide recently have called for attention to happiness in social policymaking (e.g., Diener, 2000; Kelly, 2012; Large, 2010; Thin, 2012). As a result, there are many efforts to collect data on happiness within nations and across the globe (Dolan, Peasgood, & White, 2008). These activities have led to an explosion in knowledge on the drivers of happiness. We now know a great deal about the aspects of people's identity, life circumstances, and social relationships that lead them to be more or less happy. We also have a growing understanding of how the characteristics of nations, states, regions, and cities may affect happiness.

Measuring Happiness

Happiness, or how positively people feel about their lives, is a multifaceted concept with various options for measurement. Happiness has two major components. The first component, known as *hedonic happiness*, consists of positive or negative emotions stemming from immediate experiences and overall life satisfaction (Diener, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2001). The second component is a more enduring sense of purpose, fulfillment, and self-realization, known as *eudaimonic happiness*, which is not necessarily influenced by recent experience (Diener, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2001).

Happiness research most commonly reports on life satisfaction and other hedonic measures. Life satisfaction is captured as a global measure (overall life satisfaction) or as a local measure pertaining to specific realms of life (e.g., family, friends, health, work, etc.). Typically, happiness researchers measure life satisfaction through a series of questions using a 7- or 10-point Likert scale. An example statement might be "In most ways, my life is close to ideal," where responding with a 1 means the respondent *strongly disagrees* with the statement and a 7 or 10 means the respondent *strongly agrees*. Some studies directly ask about respondents' happiness or subjective wellbeing. Other studies account for overarching states like general wellbeing, which includes conditions other than happiness, such as physical and emotional health, access to basic needs, and quality of life. Research on the outcomes of using different measures of perceived happiness finds that these measures are largely consistent (Diener, Suh, Lucas, & Smith, 1999).

What unites the diverse measures of happiness is that these conditions are perceived by individuals rather than observed in individuals. Debate, however, is heated in the happiness literature on the value of accounting for perceived happiness and the potential for using more objective measures, such as using wearable technologies to collect data on biostatistical indicators (e.g., skin reactivity, brain activity, surface skin temperature, and stress measures). Research that objectively measures happiness to date has been limited.

In this essay, we use the term *happiness* to describe the findings of research that can include various measures of mainly perceived happiness, life satisfaction, or subjective wellbeing.

Individual Drivers

Much of our happiness is driven by traits that we are born with or acquire over time. Studies of differences in happiness among twins with diverse life outcomes find that an estimated 33% to 52% of variation in happiness is explained by genetics (De Neve, Christakis, Fowler, & Frey, 2012; Lykken & Tellegen, 1996; Nes, Røysamb, Tambs, Harris, & Reichborn-Kjennerud, 2006). Some people are born with a higher baseline level of happiness than others (Sheldon & Lyubomirsky, 2006). However, changing life circumstances, such as earnings, employment, and marital status, also can lead a person with a particular baseline level of happiness to be more or less happy over time (Jokela, Bleidorn, Lamb, Gosling, & Rentfrow, 2015; Lucas & Diener, 2008).

There is considerable consensus on the individual characteristics that lead to happiness across studies. Dolan et al.'s (2008) review of the findings of large sample size studies of happiness, mainly from the economics literature, highlights where consensus is tightest. Being Latino, physically or psychologically healthy, married, and trusting of others and society is strongly associated with being happier. Being a senior or young adult, female, religious, and earning more is also associated with being happier, but these relationships are weaker, meaning that the effects of these characteristics on happiness are smaller or there are

diminishing returns. For instance, people who earn more are happier up to a point, after which income does not strongly affect happiness. However, feeling that you are earning relatively more income than others is strongly associated with greater happiness. Conversely, being unemployed is strongly associated with less happiness. Being disabled is associated with being less happy, but this effect may become smaller over time by adapting to the disability. People who have higher ambitions and take care of others also tend to be less happy.

Social Drivers

Social relationships exert a strong positive force on happiness (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Diener & Seligman, 2002; Dolan et al., 2008; Fowler & Christakis, 2008; Holder & Coleman, 2009; Layard, 2005; Myers, 2000). Considering the tendency of very happy people to have deep and fulfilling social relationships, Diener and Seligman (2002) propose "good social relationships are, like food and thermoregulation, universally important to human mood" (p. 83). Social engagement connects us with others and prevents us from being isolated, which may help to bolster happiness over the lifecycle (Hawton et al., 2011). Social capital may arise from our relationships when we trust and reciprocate with one another and share information and social norms (Coleman, 1988). Social capital enables us to rely on our relationships to obtain knowledge and resources and get things done (Coleman, 1988; De Souza Briggs, 1997). Greater trust of others, in turn, is associated with greater happiness (Layard, 2005).

Geographic Drivers

There is a growing understanding of the role that national, state, regional, and city geographies may play in happiness. Most of the scholarship on happiness at these scales addresses how aggregate demographic and socioeconomic conditions within a geographic unit affect its aggregate happiness. Largely overlooked are how geographic conditions may affect individual happiness, and the potential role that the built environment may play in aggregate happiness. Nations are most commonly studied, although there is increasing interest in exploring variation in happiness among states, regions, and cities within nations.

More heated is the debate on contributing factors in the body of literature on the geographic drivers of happiness. An enduring conversation concerns the role that relative versus absolute conditions play in a nation's happiness. For instance, research shows that nations that have higher incomes have higher levels of happiness (Diener, Oishi, & Lucas, 2003; Diener & Suh, 1997; Easterlin, 1995). However, it is unclear whether countries with the highest incomes always have the happiest people, or whether people who are relatively high earners within poorer countries might also have high levels of happiness (Deaton, 2008; Easterlin, 1974, 1995; Stevenson & Wolfers, 2008). There also is growing awareness that nations with greater income inequality may have lower levels of happiness, although this claim is similarly debated (Dolan et al., 2008; Goldthorpe, 2010; Wilkinson & Pickett, 2009).

This body of literature also highlights a range of factors that may affect happiness after controlling for income. Nations with a more individualistic culture tend to be happier, potentially because their citizens have greater choices and freedom of self-expression (Diener et al., 2003; Rentfrow, Mellander, & Florida, 2009). Happier countries also seem to have stronger track records of human rights and greater social equality (Rentfrow et al., 2009). Places with higher educational attainment have happier people (Florida, Mellander, & Rentfrow, 2013; Lawless & Lucas, 2010; Rentfrow et al., 2009). States with a higher proportion of creative class workers—occupations such as computer science, architecture, and law that involve problem solving and extensive education—have residents who exhibit healthier behaviors but not necessarily greater happiness (Rentfrow et al., 2009). People living in states with better climates are not necessarily happier than those living in states with poorer climates (Schkade & Kahneman, 1998). Cities with higher levels of income inequality may have lower levels of happiness (Glaeser, Resseger, & Tobio, 2009), but other studies show more mixed results about the impact of income inequality at the state level on happiness (Dolan et al., 2008). There is debate about the association between aggregate happiness and the inclusiveness of a geographic unit, as approximated by the percentage of cohabitating gays, artists, and immigrants. Rentfrow et al. (2009) found no effect for gays and artists but a positive effect of immigrants on happiness at the state level; Lawless and Lucas (2010) found a weak or negative effect of gays, artists, and immigrants on happiness at the regional level.

There is also research that links housing values, population density, and commute time with happiness. States with higher median housing values have greater happiness, controlling for income (Rentfrow et al., 2009). One theory is that higher housing values are associated with higher-quality community amenities that make people happier, such as top-rated schools, parks and open spaces, and shopping opportunities (Florida & Mellander, 2010). Living in areas with lower population density also generally is associated with greater happiness at various geographies ranging from national to city scale (A. Campbell, Converse, & Rodgers, 1976; Davis & Fine-Davis, 1991; Lawless & Lucas, 2010; Richmond, Filson, Paine, Pfeiffer, & Taylor,

2000; see Crider, Willits, & Kanagy, 1991, for a review), although other research finds modest or no effects from population density on happiness (Crider et al., 1991; Florida et al., 2013). Research also shows that living in a city or larger city adversely affects or does not affect happiness (e.g., Dolan et al., 2008; Morris, 2011). One theory is that less-dense places, rural areas, and small towns may have greater social engagement and cohesion among neighbors, leading to greater happiness (Crider et al., 1991). Another theory is that these places may be less competitive, and their residents may have lower ambitions and more achievable goals, which is a recipe for greater happiness (Clemente & Sauer, 1976). Studies addressing the metropolitan-level drivers of happiness also have examined commute time. Some studies have found that long commute times detract from happiness (Morris, 2011; Stutzer & Frey, 2008); others have found weak or no associations between commute time and happiness (Florida et al., 2013; Lawless & Lucas, 2010).

An Underexplored Link: Neighborhood Built Environment and Happiness

We draw on the findings from existing research in this section to show how the neighborhood built environment may shape residents' happiness. We do not well understand why some neighborhoods have happier residents than others, and how neighborhood conditions affect residents' happiness, yet neighborhoods are a primary setting for people's lives. The neighborhood built environment also is a central realm of planning where planners can enact change. The built environment includes all elements of a neighborhood that are manmade and influenced by local zoning, building codes, and land use regulations: buildings, infrastructure systems, open and green spaces, and the interactions among these elements. The built environment is distinct from the natural environment, a realm also addressed by planners, which includes topography, climate, and water supply (Northridge, Sclar, & Biswas, 2003).

Design Features Promoting Social Engagement and Personal Security

The physical characteristics of a neighborhood, including its housing design and density, street connectivity, land use mix, and the availability of public spaces, may lead to more or less opportunities for social engagement among neighbors (Brueckner & Largey, 2008; Duany, Plater-Zyberk, & Speck, 2010; Freeman, 2001; Glaeser & Gottlieb, 2006; Leyden, 2003; Lund, 2003; Mason, 2010; Putnam, 2000; Talen, 1999; Williamson, 2002). One theory is that places with more traditional neighborhood design features—such as grid-lined streets, anterior garages, moderate housing density, and front porches—have greater social engagement among neighbors. Studies testing this theory find on some level that a more compact neighborhood urban form may lead to a higher level of interaction among neighbors (Leyden, 2003; Lund, 2003; Mason, 2010). Strong links exist between social engagement and happiness, as previously discussed (Diener & Seligman, 2002; Dolan et al., 2008; Layard, 2005). Thus, places with more traditional neighborhood design may also have greater happiness, although researchers have yet to establish this link.

Interestingly, research that attempts to approximate a more compact urban form by measuring the effect of geographic location (e.g., central city), population, or housing density on social engagement tends to find no, mixed, or contradictory effects on social engagement (Brueckner & Largey, 2008; Glaeser & Gottlieb, 2006; Freeman, 2001; Williamson, 2002). Further, Morris (2011) finds a negative relationship between population density and happiness by analyzing national data from the Gallup–Healthways Well-Being Index survey, suggesting that high levels of population density may be associated with lower levels of happiness.

Two additional observations are warranted. First, more socially engaged residents may be able to better combat threats such as crime and recover from disasters (Sampson, Raudenbush, & Earls, 1997; Seidman, 2013). Overcoming threats and crises may reinforce residents' social ties and sense of agency and increase their happiness. Second, researchers have not adequately studied whether or not a person's happiness depends on social engagement with neighbors. Neighborhood residents may be happy and socially engaged, just not with each other.

A neighborhood's physical characteristics also affect its "eyes on the street," disorder and decay, and criminal opportunities (Cohen & Felson, 1979; Skogan, 1990; J. Wilson & Kelling, 1982), which in turn shape residents' sense of personal security, stress, experience of crime, and thus ultimately happiness. For instance, residents living in neighborhoods with buildings that have more street frontage and windows facing the street may be more aware of what is happening in the neighborhood and able to contest threats to personal security (J. Wilson & Kelling, 1982). In turn, neighborhoods with fewer problems, such as vacant or deteriorating buildings and unlit spaces hidden from public view, may have fewer places where people can engage in elicit behaviors, deterring criminal activity (Cohen & Felson, 1979; Skogan, 1990).

Research has established a link between residents' perceived personal security and their level of happiness. The results are conclusive: People who live in places they perceive as threatening their personal security tend to be less happy (Cutrona, Russell, Brown, Clark, & Hessling, 2005; Dolan et al., 2008; Lelkes, 2006; Morris, 2011). Research analyzing the correlates of happiness among about 30,000 people from 21 countries using data from the European Social Survey finds that those who live in unsafe areas have a 7% lower chance of being very happy (Lelkes, 2006). A study of 720 African-American mothers living in small to mid-sized U.S. cities finds that those who live in more disadvantaged neighborhoods with greater social disorder, as measured by dilapidation, delinquency, and substance abuse, are unhappier, particularly after undergoing a negative life event (Cutrona et al., 2005). Morris's (2011) national study finds that respondents' sense of personal security walking alone where they lived at night is the geographic factor that contributes the most to their happiness.

Access to Open, Natural, and Green Space

Humans became isolated from the natural world relatively late in evolutionary history, yet our engrained biological instincts may draw us to the outdoors (Nisbet, Zelenski, & Murphy, 2011). E. O. Wilson (1984) uses the term *biophilia* to characterize the psychological benefits that people get from engaging with the natural environment and living things (Kellert & Wilson, 1983). A rich body of research has since confirmed links between access to open, natural, and green environments and happiness (Akers et al., 2012; L. Campbell & Wiesen, 2010; Kaplan, 2001; Wells & Laquatra, 2010). Access to these spaces can occur at different scales, from a window overlooking a grassy lawn or forest to living near a regional park. Windows offer a brief respite from other activities with little effort (Kaplan, 2001). Parks, community gardens, botanical gardens, building exteriors, and rights-of-way are examples of restorative open spaces that may make people feel happier (L. Campbell & Wiesen, 2010). Access to active, green environments may be especially important to seniors' happiness (Loukaitou-Sideris, Levy-Storms, Chen, & Brozen, 2016/this issue; Wells & Laquatra, 2010). Research shows that seniors who use or live near parks report better physical and mental health, including happiness; however, parks must offer appropriate facilities and programming to attract seniors (Loukaitou-Sideris et al., 2016/this issue).

What is it about access to open, natural, and green spaces that makes people happy? Humans may have an affinity for nature, as mentioned above. Part of this effect may connect to simply viewing the color green. Green contributes to feelings of serenity (Akers et al., 2012). Green environments also symbolize fertility and food availability, which historically have been critical to our survival (Akers et al., 2012). Another theory is that open, natural, and green spaces may bolster happiness by cultivating wonder and prompting exploration, since these spaces are complex and malleable. Finally, these spaces may contribute to happiness by improving other aspects of physical and mental health if they allow for activities like gardening and exercise (Ferrer-i-Carbonell & Gowdy, 2007).

Debatable Effects: Housing Diversity and Conditions, Transportation Infrastructure, and Polluting Land Uses

Existing research offers lessons on links between other neighborhood built environment features and happiness, but the results are less conclusive. These elements include housing diversity, housing conditions, transportation infrastructure, and polluting land uses.

The diversity of housing types and tenures within a neighborhood may affect its transiency and, in turn, its residents' social engagement and happiness. Neighborhoods that have a broader range of housing types and tenures may have more opportunities for residents to "age in place," or stay in the neighborhood over the lifecycle. Places where people age in place have low levels of residential transition and potentially greater social engagement, cohesion, and happiness. The opportunity to age in place may be particularly critical to seniors' happiness, as they rely more strongly on their existing social networks and integrate their homes into their sense of self (Carstensen, 2006; Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981; Harrell, Lynott, Guzman, & Lampkin, 2014; Kochera, Straight, & Guterbock, 2005).

However, neighborhoods with diverse housing types and tenures also may have greater residential transition and less social engagement and cohesion. Homeowners stay in place longer than renters. About two-thirds of renters moved from 2005 to 2010 compared with fewer than one-quarter of homeowners (Ihrke & Faber, 2012). Residents living in a neighborhood with more transient renters may be less socially engaged than those living in a neighborhood with less-transient homeowners (Putnam, 2000; Rohe & Lindblad, 2013). Further, a neighborhood's mix of housing types, tenures, and costs shapes its demographic and socioeconomic conditions. These conditions, in turn, may influence residents' social connections and happiness. Older, wealthier, and more educated people socialize more than younger, poorer, and less educated people (Putnam, 2000). Communities of concentrated poverty or affluence

may be more socially fragmented than middle-class or socioeconomically diverse communities (Oliver, 1999; W. J. Wilson, 1987). How the diversity of housing types and tenures within a community affects residents' happiness is still an open question.

Relatively few studies assess the potential effects of housing conditions on happiness. This is curious, given that the roots of planning stem in part from efforts to ease overcrowding and improve housing conditions in slums (Sloane, 2006). Existing research suggests that relative, as opposed to absolute, housing conditions may be most associated with happiness. People who live in housing that is relatively better than where they lived previously or is in line with their aspired housing conditions may be happier (A. Campbell & Converse, 1972; A. Campbell et al., 1976). In turn, having more desirable housing conditions typically indicates living in a neighborhood with more desirable community conditions, which actually may more directly influence residents' happiness (Florida et al., 2013).

A neighborhood is not only a place but also a point of access to jobs, recreation, shopping, and other features of a broader city and region. Access is enabled by a neighborhood's transportation system, which has infrastructure that allows for the safe and convenient use of transit, biking, walking, and driving. Infrastructure includes features such as pedestrian paths, bike lanes, bus and rail stops, parking, and freeway on- and off-ramps. Transportation is a derived need. People's happiness may diminish if inadequate transportation or mobility interferes with their pursuit of their life goals (e.g., visiting frequently with family or friends) or leads them to use a less desired transportation mode (Ettema, Gärling, Olsson, & Friman, 2010).

Researchers have begun to examine links between a neighborhood's transportation infrastructure and residents' happiness, but their conclusions are inconsistent (e.g., Brereton, Clinch, & Ferreria, 2008; Leyden, Goldberg, & Michelbach, 2011; Morris, 2011). Morris (2011) finds that living near subways is associated with being happier. Relationships between happiness and proximity to bus or commuter rail are murkier; there is no relationship between living near jobs or shopping and happiness. Leyden et al. (2011) finds that people who feel that subways, trains, or buses are more convenient to use in their city tend to be happier. Brereton et al. (2008) find no relationship between living near public transit and happiness in their survey of 1,500 Irish people, yet those who live closer to major roads are less happy.

Indirect evidence on how neighborhood transportation infrastructure may affect happiness comes from a related body of research addressing links between travel behavior and happiness (e.g., Delbosc, 2012; De Vos, Schwanen, Van Acker, & Witlox, 2013; Ellaway, Macintyre, Hiscock, & Kearns, 2003; Morris, 2015; Morris & Guerra, 2015; Olsson, Gärling, Ettema, Friman, & Fujii, 2013). Neighborhoods with infrastructure or regulations that encourage walking or bicycling, such as sidewalks, ample street crossings, bike lanes, and slower traffic speeds, may have happier residents, since people who spend more time walking and bicycling tend to be happier (Morris, 2015; Morris & Guerra, 2015; Olsson et al., 2013). However, neighborhoods with infrastructure allowing for vehicle ownership, such as parking, also may have happier residents, since people who have access to vehicles and travel by car tend to be happier (Ellaway et al., 2003; Morris, 2011; Morris & Guerra, 2015). Clearly, further research is needed to better understand the tradeoffs of including infrastructure for different travel modes on the happiness of neighborhood residents.

In this review, we mainly focus on built environment characteristics that may increase happiness, such as urban designs that may lead to social engagement and personal security and amenities like open, natural, and green space; transit; and others. However, built environment characteristics also decrease physical and mental health (e.g., Kawakami, Winkleby, Skog, Szulkin, & Sundquist, 2011), and potentially happiness, although researchers are still making this link. For instance, one factor that may explain the mixed results on the link between access to transit and happiness is that living near transit may also mean living near more noise, which may reduce happiness (Diener, 2000; Van Praag & Baarsma, 2005).

Some research shows that living in a polluted environment may diminish happiness (e.g., Ferrer-i-Carbonell & Gowdy, 2007; Levinson, 2012; Li, Folmer, & Xue, 2014; Welsch, 2006). Ferrer-i-Carbonell and Gowdy (2007) find that, among a sample of 10,000 people from the British Household Panel Survey, respondents who report living in a polluted environment are unhappier than people who do not report living in a polluted environment. A handful of studies use similar techniques to show that people who have greater and more hazardous exposure to polluted air (actual and perceived) tend to have lower happiness (e.g., Levinson, 2012; Li et al., 2014; Welsch, 2006). Yet evidence is not consistent in showing that pollution and other adverse environmental factors are related to happiness (Dolan et al., 2008). One factor might be that, at least in theory, residents who are exposed to pollution should have lower housing costs (Van Praag & Baarsma, 2005).

Emerging Research: The Role of Personality

Emerging research suggests that the match between people's personalities and the characteristics of their

neighborhood may shape their happiness (Cutrona et al., 2005; Jokela et al., 2015; Rentfrow, Gosling, & Potter, 2008). People with certain personalities tend to cluster in particular places, an outcome partly of historic migration patterns, repeated social interactions, and physical features such as climate (Rentfrow et al., 2008). More extroverted people tend to live in the Midwest and Deep South; more neurotic people tend to live in the Northeast (Rentfrow et al., 2008). Some environmental conditions may contribute to happiness only among people with certain personalities. For example, Jokela et al. (2015), in a study of more than 56,000 London residents, find that more open-minded people have greater happiness in neighborhoods that have other open-minded people, greater ethnic diversity, and population density. However, more extroverted and emotionally stable people have similar happiness regardless of where they live.

Researchers have yet to study links among personality, neighborhood built environment, and happiness, so it is too early to draw conclusions on the aspects of neighborhood built environments that may vary with the distinct personalities of different people. However, it is possible that residents may be more or less affected by the built environment features discussed here depending on their personality.

The Main Takeaways for Planners

We highlight three ways that neighborhood built environment may affect residents' happiness. Traditional neighborhood design features may offer residents greater opportunities for social engagement. Residents living in neighborhoods with street frontage, windows facing the street, and fewer vacant buildings may have a greater sense of personal security. Existing research confirms that people who are more socially engaged and feel more personal security where they live are happier; thus, neighborhoods with design features that allow for greater socialization and eyes on the street and less disorder and criminal opportunities may have happier residents, although researchers have yet to establish this link. In turn, places that offer access to open, natural, and green space may have happier residents. Planners can use this knowledge to plan for greater opportunities for neighborhood happiness in their communities.

The effects of other neighborhood built environment elements on happiness, including the diversity of housing types, housing conditions, transportation infrastructure, and polluting land uses, are more debatable. In turn, emerging research suggests that the characteristics of a neighborhood may not uniformly affect residents' happiness; rather, people's personalities may influence these effects. Further research is needed on these topics to draw lessons for planning practice.

Planning for Happy Neighborhoods

Planners can improve on neighborhood happiness by evaluating existing plans, policies, or projects, or by collaboratively engaging with residents to develop new plans, policies, and projects. We know of only two models that provide guidance to planners on how to undertake these tasks. The first is a health impact assessment (HIA), a process planners can use to understand the potential impacts of an existing plan, policy, or project on the happiness of residents within a neighborhood, as well as to advocate for changes that would lead to greater happiness. The second is the Sustainability Through Happiness Framework (StHF), a participatory neighborhood planning process planners can initiate to develop plans, policies, and projects with residents that improve opportunities for neighborhood happiness. We describe here these approaches and their potential challenges to implementation.

Health Impact Assessments

Planners can use an HIA to evaluate how neighborhood-level plans, policies, or projects may affect residents' happiness. Planners have increasingly used HIAs to evaluate impacts on residents' physical health and, to a lesser extent, mental health, but planners have yet to use HIAs to evaluate impacts on residents' happiness. Doing so requires incorporating happiness-related indicators into an HIA's evaluation criteria. We describe the components of an HIA, the increasing use of HIAs by planning practitioners, and how to overcome barriers to using HIAs to improve residents' happiness in this section.

An HIA is a tool for evaluating how plans, policies, or projects may affect health (Bhatia & Wernham, 2008). An HIA has two purposes. First, it allows planners to use evaluation criteria to assess how different decisions may affect personal and community health. Practitioners may derive evaluation criteria from standard checklists based on best practices reported by the literature (called a "desktop" HIA) or by brainstorming and vetting criteria with area health experts and other stakeholders (Dannenberg et al., 2006). Second, an HIA recommends courses of action that would best promote greater overall health and more equitably distribute health outcomes. Research shows that HIAs are effective tools when conducted early in the planning process, as they can influence decisions, spur new partnerships, and increase policymakers' awareness of how their decisions affect health (Bhatia & Corburn, 2011; Bhatia & Wernham, 2008; Bourcier, Charbonneau, Cahill, & Dannenberg, 2015; Dannenberg et al., 2006).

The HIA is growing in popularity as concerns about emerging epidemics of obesity, heart disease, and diabetes

escalate (APA, 2015a; Bhatia & Wernham, 2008; Bourcier et al., 2015; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2014a, 2014b, 2014c). By 2007, practitioners had completed only 27 HIAs in the United States, commonly as part of a broader federally or state-mandated environmental impact assessment (EIA; Dannenberg et al., 2008). The number of HIAs completed or in process had increased to 300 by mid-2014, many conducted independent of an EIA (Bourcier et al., 2015). Planning-related HIAs comprise an estimated one-third of the HIAs undertaken in the United States from 2004 to 2014 (APA, 2015a). Most planning-related HIAs evaluate the health impacts of a plan (63%); 24% evaluate the health impacts of a policy and 13% evaluate a project action (APA, 2015a). Planners most often apply HIAs to assess, in declining order, the impacts of land use plans, comprehensive plans, development regulations, and transportation plans, policies, or projects (APA, 2015a).

The evaluation criteria covered by HIAs typically relate to physical health, such as the use of medical care, traffic hazards, air pollution, alcohol consumption, substandard living conditions, noise-related sleep disturbance, and obesity. A minority of HIAs assesses effects on mental health (Dannenberg et al., 2008). HIA criteria commonly fail to cover factors addressing emotional and spiritual health or happiness; one example is the collaborative Design for Health compilation of best practice criteria for doing a desktop HIA of the elements of comprehensive plans (Design for Health, n.d.). Of the 22 criteria the Design for Health best practice criteria list as "essential for health" in land use elements, only one is remotely related to residents' happiness: adequate street lighting, which contributes to a sense of personal security. Assessing potential detriments to physical health may reveal potential detriments to happiness because physical health and happiness are linked, as previously discussed (Dolan et al., 2008; Lawless & Lucas, 2010). Yet a more direct approach is warranted.

Slight adjustments to HIA criteria could effectively identify plans, projects, or policies in need of happiness-centric interventions. The evaluation criteria in an HIA should include the impacts of proposed plans, policies, or projects on neighborhood social engagement and cohesion, given the strong role that social relationships play in happiness (Diener & Seligman, 2002; Dolan et al., 2008; Layard, 2005). Planners also can use HIAs to assess impacts on the neighborhood's eyes on the street, disorder, and criminal opportunities, conditions that influence happiness by affecting residents' sense of personal safety. Finally, practitioners could use HIAs to assess access to open, natural, and green space, given its connection to happiness. HIAs not necessarily related to planning have periodically covered impacts on social engagement, crime, and access to open, natural, and green space, but this is not standard practice (Bhatia & Wernham, 2008; Dannenberg et al., 2008). Planners should aim to standardize these practices.

HIAs can help planners understand the impacts of existing plans, policies, and projects on residents' happiness within a neighborhood. However, they do not provide guidance to planners on how to develop plans, policies, and projects that could lead to greater opportunities for neighborhood happiness. Here we introduce a model that planners can use to accomplish these ends.

The Sustainability Through Happiness Framework

The StHF is an iterative and participatory process we developed for planners to help residents understand how their neighborhoods affect their happiness and to plan for place-based interventions to increase opportunities for happiness (Cloutier & Pfeiffer, 2015). No comparable model exists to our knowledge. We discuss in this section the stages of the model and the outcomes and challenges experienced from applying the model in one community in the southwestern United States.

The first stage of the StHF is a happiness visioning session involving planners, local government agencies and institutions with ties to the community, and community leaders. The purpose of the visioning session is twofold. First, planners identify interventions that may improve opportunities for happiness and sustainability within a neighborhood based on their prior experience and factors identified in the existing scholarly literature. Second, local government agencies, institutions, and community leaders evaluate their own capacities and the feasibility of proposed interventions based on their local knowledge.

In the second stage of the StHF, planners then engage neighborhood residents by holding meetings and workshops, conducting interviews, and using other participatory techniques designed to involve the public (Creighton, 2005). Residents are asked to identify aspects of their neighborhood that contribute to and detract from their happiness. These aspects are then compared with interventions identified in the first stage. Only aspects that overlap with previously identified interventions and embody sustainable development principles—interventions enhancing environmental preservation, economic development, and social equity—are explored in subsequent stages.

The third and fourth stages of the StHF, the profit inventory and systems planning, also involve planners, local government agencies and institutions, and community leaders. These stages focus on identifying sites within

the neighborhood that could host interventions identified in the first and second stages as well partners missing from the process and the activities needed to meet goals. In the fifth and final stage of the StHF—sustainability interventions—planners, local government agencies and institutions, and community leaders create a plan for the desired interventions collaboratively with residents. Once interventions are made, the process reverts back to the first stage and begins again. After several iterations in which planners lead the process, the residents eventually lead the StHF.

We applied the StHF in one neighborhood in a fast-growing region of the southwestern United States in 2014. Participants have carried out one cycle of the StHF and are currently undertaking another cycle. The neighborhood, henceforth called "the Valley," is a predominately low- to middle-income Latino community of mid- to late-20th-century single-family homes located along a canal. The Valley's experience with the StHF is described in depth in Cloutier and Pfeiffer (2015). Key planned interventions as part of the StHF include a canal beautification project and a safety and education program. Additional plans call for improving lighting, introducing solar power, reducing water loss, and carving out a social space for residents. A local university is providing the technical expertise to assist with these plans.

The challenges to implementing the StHF are common to participatory neighborhood planning processes, which are addressed elsewhere (e.g., Creighton, 2005). These include difficulties in a) building residents' trust, b) sustaining momentum and retaining local knowledge, and c) acquiring resources to carry out interventions. Solutions to these challenges in the Valley have included a) completing short-term interventions before undertaking long-term interventions, b) retaining a small core group of resident participants throughout the process while providing opportunities for others to cycle in and out, and c) partnering with institutions, such as a research center at a local university and a nonprofit housing developer, to carry out interventions.

A unique challenge that users of the StHF face is convincing participants and other planners and community members that happiness is a worthwhile goal to pursue across diverse neighborhoods. Critics argue that undertaking happiness-related interventions distracts from meeting more fundamental community needs such as access to better schools, jobs, and public transit. Planning for neighborhood happiness may be a more ethical approach in middle- or upper-income communities than in disadvantaged communities facing many deprivations. However, research on happiness finds that people from diverse cultures and of varying levels of affluence spend similar amounts of time thinking about happiness and ascribe similar importance to it (Diener, 2000). We believe efforts to apply the StHF widely across diverse neighborhoods are justified based on this finding.

A Call to Action

Planning for health means working toward greater mental, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing as well as physical health. In this review, we demonstrate how planners can shape happiness, an important aspect of wellbeing, on the neighborhood level. Happiness is a complex state: A large portion of what makes us happy is determined by the characteristics that we are born with, such as our sex, race or ethnicity, and our personality. Yet our experiences and environment also shape our happiness.

We identify two ways that planners can influence residents' happiness on the neighborhood level. First, planners can advocate for physical designs that increase residents' opportunities for social engagement and sense of personal security in their neighborhood. Social engagement and personal security are strongly linked to happiness; thus design interventions leading to these outcomes may indirectly promote greater happiness. Second, planners can increase access to open, natural, and green space within a neighborhood, which research suggests directly increases residents' happiness.

Planners can use two strategies to meet these goals: the HIA and the StHF. HIAs can help planners identify impacts that existing plans, policies, or projects may have on neighborhood happiness and recommend actions that help to increase happiness. The StHF guides planners in collaborating with residents to arrive at happiness-related neighborhood interventions. There are challenges, however, to implementing these strategies. For instance, existing HIA evaluation criteria are largely oriented to factors affecting physical health. Planners must integrate happiness-related indicators into evaluation criteria to assess impacts on happiness. In turn, users of the StHF will face the classic challenges of public participation in planning, such as building residents' trust, sustaining momentum, and securing resources to carry out goals. Users also face the unique challenge of justifying the ethics of a happiness-centric planning approach when other basic needs are unmet.

The time is ripe for planning scholars to engage in the hearty debates on happiness occurring across the social sciences. We know little about the relative contribution that neighborhood-level factors play in individual happiness. An overarching challenge in examining the

contribution of neighborhood factors to individual happiness, or conducting neighborhood-level analyses of happiness, is the lack of geographic refinement available in publicly accessible longitudinal data sources, such as the U.S. General Social Survey. Purchasing proprietary data or collecting original data, which can be expensive and time consuming, often is warranted.

At the same time, geographic and built environmental characteristics (regional level down to neighborhood level) accounted for less than 2% of variation in participants' happiness in Morris's (2011) study. This pales in comparison to the estimated 33% to 50% of variation potentially explained by genetic factors. Neighborhood context thus may play a small role in shaping happiness, but we require additional evidence.

Further research is warranted to understand the complex ways that neighborhood factors such as the diversity of housing types, housing conditions, transportation infrastructure, and polluting land uses affect happiness, as well as how residents' personalities affect the impact that built environment characteristics have on their happiness, as previously discussed. Comparative research testing effects across neighborhoods in diverse cities also is valuable; it often is unclear whether links between happiness and neighborhood built environment observed in a survey done among a sample of neighborhoods in one city may apply to others with different characteristics. Finally, methodological innovations are needed to tease out whether happier people tend to gravitate to neighborhoods with particular built environments or particular built environments make people happier. Answers to these questions will help to identify effective planning interventions.

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